



Advanced Steel Technology Work Ready Testimonial

Advanced Steel Technology (AST), a steel manufacturer in Rome, Ga., was unhappy with the quality of applicants for its open positions. And frequently, new hires had a difficult time learning the advanced skills required for success on the job.

A steel fabricator with more than 150 employees, AST builds parts for the heavy construction industry. Employees use CAD software to maximize the number of parts that can be created from a single sheet of steel — so math and computer skills are vital to ensure quality and productivity. AST turned to Georgia's Work Ready Initiative to address its hiring challenges and to ensure current employees have the skills needed for top performance.

Advanced Steel began profiling its jobs in 2003 to determine the skills necessary for each position, then assessed its entire workforce to determine each employee's basic skill level. "If we had anyone who did not meet the minimum requirement, we worked with them to bring them up to the level they needed for success in their position," said Linda Hales, human resources manager.

To equip its employees with the skills necessary for the job, AST worked with Coosa Valley Technical College to develop a training and incentive program focused on mathematics, blueprinting and computer skills. "The assessments showed us where our employees were, and then through training we brought them to where they needed to be," Hales said. "Work Ready helped us not only establish the baseline, but helped us understand at what level our employees needed to perform for optimum efficiency."

And the perennial challenge of under-qualified applicants is now a thing of the past. "Thanks to Work Ready, when we hire someone we know he or she will be trainable — that's the most important thing for us," Hales said. New employees start on a probationary period and are required to meet certain performance milestones within six months.

Prior to implementing Work Ready, AST would occasionally have to terminate employees due to skill or performance issues during the probationary period. "We haven't had to terminate anyone for not being able to meet that basic efficiency level since we started hiring Certified Work Ready job seekers," Hales said.

The company has also realized measurable improvements in turnover and quality. AST's defect rate fell from 1.25 percent to .08 percent rejects. "That is a result of our employees being trained and being able to perform at the level they need to make the product," Hales said.

Work Ready facilitates partnerships between industry and Georgia's technical colleges; indeed, AST's relationship with Coosa Valley Technical College has been another factor in the company's success with Work Ready. "Coosa Valley Tech is great," Hales said. "They've always been very helpful and worked alongside us to develop the training programs we need for our employees."

For more information on how your company can participate in Work Ready, visit www.gaworkready.org.

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